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3. — *Die Politik der Päpste von Gregor I. bis Gregor VII.* RUDOLF BAXMANN. Leipzig. 1869.

THE American public is much better supplied with good histories of the Church during the Middle Ages than with secular histories of the same period. Besides Milman's "Latin Christianity," there are many translations of valuable German works on the same subject. Owing to the rapid advances made of late years in the discovery and publication of original documents, the works of Neander and Mosheim have become somewhat antiquated ; but their places have been well supplied to Americans by translations of Gieseler and Hase, published in cheap and available editions. The former is, and always must be, of the greatest possible use as a well-selected collection of the most important original documents of the period ; but the narrative portion of the work is little more than a running commentary, which serves to hold the citations together. To a beginner, therefore, something of a more explanatory nature is necessary ; while to the advanced student Gieseler is useful principally as a book of reference. The latter, Dr. Hase's book, is devoted more particularly to the constitution of the Roman Church, and has the disadvantage of referring very seldom to modern works. There are also, of course, numberless histories in German of which no English translations exist, from Gfrörer's exhaustive volumes down to Baur's book, which is little more than the groundwork of his lectures.

The list of works is formidable, and the number of able writers on the period very large ; but nevertheless Herr Baxmann has well supplied a serious want to the student of Papal history. It is hardly too much to say that to the majority of secular readers Church history is interesting only in so far as it resembles other histories,—that is, politically. The heresies and schisms, and the endless controversies of the early Christians, however edifying they may be as showing the progress of dogma, are probably more tedious than any other subject of historical study ; but the growth of Church influence and power, and the construction of the great fabric of Papal supremacy, are subjects of the deepest interest, and of vital importance to a thorough understanding of mediæval history. Any author who gives to the world a good account of the early Church policy, stripped of the encumbrances of spiritual disputes, renders an important service to the public.

This Herr Baxmann has undertaken to do, and his success is almost commensurate with the wisdom of his selection in choosing to treat

Papal history from a purely political stand-point. Wisdom of selection, coupled with a good arrangement of parts, forms the most striking merit of the book ; indeed, a mere glance at the table of contents almost suffices to prove this. Unlike Mr. Froude, Herr Baxmann considers it proper not only to have a certain knowledge of the period preceding that of which he is about to treat, but also to give his readers some idea of that period. The book opens, therefore, with a brief sketch, occupying about forty pages, of Church history down to the time of Gregory I. "The Policy of the Popes from Gregory I. to Gregory VII." is the judiciously chosen subject of the main work. All Papal history, including in its broadest sense all the history of the Roman Church, may be roughly divided into four distinct periods. The first of these, beginning with the Christian era, and ending with Gregory I., is occupied by the struggle of the Church to establish itself, and gain purely spiritual supremacy. The second period, one of five hundred years, includes the entire political development of the Papacy, and culminates in the pontificate of Gregory VII. The two following centuries, which form the third period, exhibit in successful operation the scheme of spiritual autocracy perfected and set in motion by the genius of Hildebrand. The history of the fourth and last period is the history of the decline and fall of the great fabric of Papal supremacy, which had been reared with so much care, and is still unfinished.

Herr Baxmann has selected the most important of the four great periods, the one which foreshadowed all the future history of the Papacy, — of its success and ultimate failure alike. The work begins with a full account of the pontificate of Gregory I., and passes rapidly over the reigns of the succeeding Popes until Gregory II. is reached. At this point the history of each pontificate is taken up in more detail and treated with proportionate fulness until the accession of Gregory VII. Herr Baxmann has brought out in the strongest light the distinctive features which marked Papal history at this time. The reader never loses sight of the slow but steady growth of the Papacy. Through all the reigns of the numerous Popes who filled St. Peter's chair during these five hundred years, even through the darkness of the tenth century, which almost degraded the Papacy to the position of appanage to an obscure family in Rome, the course of Church policy is clear and distinct. The causes of the success of Gregory VII. and Innocent III. are made perfectly apparent ; and even then the results achieved by the great Popes are seen to be inevitable. The author allots the last hundred pages of his history to an account of the pontificate of Gregory VII., and an analysis of

his character and policy. The history of this pontificate embodies all Herr Baxmann's most excellent qualities, and is certainly all that could be desired, if not the best that has ever appeared. It is not an eloquent or enthusiastic account of the years during which Hildebrand was Pope; it makes no attempt at fine writing; but the great events with which that decade was crowded are narrated so well, and so skilfully grouped, that the character of Gregory and the results he achieved stand out in strong relief. In his discussion of Gregory's character and policy the author has been less fortunate. His view of Gregory's policy and its effects is sufficiently just and discriminating; but in his estimate of Gregory's character he has failed. The cause of his failure is obvious. Herr Baxmann tells us, in his Introduction, that he writes from the Protestant stand-point; and although he is far from being an extremist, he is sufficiently biased to be unable to do justice to Hildebrand. The historical stand-point of the German Protestants is tolerably well defined, and it is perhaps not to be expected that a member of that party should satisfy the outside world in his treatment of the greatest genius of the Middle Ages, who had the triple misfortune of being an Italian, a Pope, and the man who more than any other brought about the dissolution of the Germanic Empire. Yet in this connection Herr Baxmann has earned the gratitude of every student of Church history, by collecting within the compass of a few pages the views of all the leading writers on Papal history in regard to Gregory's character.

However faulty the author's estimate of Gregory may be, it proves that Herr Baxmann has originality. The disclosure of this power throws into prominence that lack of suggestiveness which is elsewhere the prevailing fault of his book. Good theorizing is the essence of good history. Incompetent men, it is true, have no right to theorize at all; but, on the other hand, the world pardons much to a Mommsen or a Macaulay. Herr Baxmann is far from incompetent, and his excessive love of condensation is a distinct fault. The bad effect of omitting all expression of the author's opinions is to make many chapters of a really first-rate book most undeniably hard reading.

Thoroughness and full references to all the most recent writers, as well as to the original documents, make these volumes remarkable even for German work. There is, however, one exception to this thoroughness. Among all the instruments used by the Popes in the construction of their political power, none played a larger part than forgeries; and among these forgeries one is *facile princeps*, — the

great masterpiece of the so-called Isidor, — which embodied and elaborated all the clumsier efforts of previous years, invented a series of new documents of the utmost importance, and left to the more cunning workmen of succeeding centuries little to do but to revise and extend. Herr Baxmann dismisses the Isidorian Decretals with scarcely a page, and that, too, after acknowledging that they were the “most important of all the forgeries, and fraught with the most serious consequences to the world’s history.” He enters into no discussion as to their probable cause, beyond saying in a general way that they were due to the tendencies of the time. It is one of the most interesting questions of that period, whether the Isidorian Decretals were an offspring of Papal policy, or simply a *bona fide* effort, on the part of certain priests in France, to free themselves from the domination of their metropolitans. Herr Baxmann offers no theory of any kind in regard to this point; and a still more striking fault is his failure to give any references to the best modern work.

Much has been done in Germany to clear up the mystery which has hitherto enveloped the origin of the false Decretals. In Sybel’s *Zeitschrift* for 1861 and 1862 there are two able essays by Karl van Noorden and Julius Weiszäcker, the latter being especially noticeable. Herr Baxmann makes no mention of them, nor of other still later works, which it is possible may have been published too late for reference in his history.

It is much to be desired that the American public should have a good translation of this, which is on the whole the best history of the Papacy at its most interesting period that has yet appeared. The style is clear, and the whole work is thorough and compendious. It is also so far condensed that it has the advantage of convenient size and form, — two octavo volumes of very moderate bulk. A good translation would be even more valuable to teachers and students than to the general public, and would supply a serious want.

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4. — *Sketches and Essays.* Reprinted by permission from the *Saturday Review*. William Blackwood and Sons: Edinburgh and London. 1873.

THE *Saturday Review* does not appeal to one’s sympathies. It is arrogant, carping, ill-tempered, and frequently ill-informed. Its criticism and its wit, like its sentences, are too much in one mould, monotonous even when most clever. It suggests fearful possibilities